



**NYCDOE**

**Quality Review: Final Report**

# **The New York City Department of Education**



# **Quality Review Report**

**Fiorello H. LaGuardia High School of Music & Art  
and Performing Arts**

**High School 485  
100 Amsterdam Avenue  
New York  
NY 10023**

**Principal: Kim Bruno**

**Dates of review: February 25 -27, 2008**

**Lead Reviewer: Denis Pittman**

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## Part 1: The school context

### Information about the school

Fiorello H. LaGuardia is a high school with 2562 students from grade 9 through grade 12. The school population comprises 16.5% Black, 19.2% Hispanic, 45% White, and 19.3% Asian students. The student body includes 0.5% English language learners and 0.6% special education students. Boys account for 26% of the students enrolled and girls account for 74%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2006-2007 was 95.8%. The school is not in receipt of Title 1 funding.

Admission to the school is mandated by New York State stipulations and is based on a competitive performance audition and academic screening of student records. Each year approximately 700 entering students are selected from more than 9000 applications.

## Part 2: Overview

### What the school does well

- The principal has very effectively communicated her vision to the whole school community, which is promoting the highest standards of performance.
- Data recording and use is very efficient and comprehensive, enabling rigorous tracking of students' achievement and progress.
- Relationships between students and staff are particularly impressive reflecting a climate of support, respect and shared objectives.
- Parents are kept very well informed about students' performance and progress through the school's highly informative communications and bulletins.
- The school offers an innovative and stimulating curriculum, reflecting an exemplary range of academic and creative opportunities that promote students' learning very successfully.
- Teaching is exceptionally well geared to the specific learning needs and aspirations of students.
- Substantial partnerships with professional groups, educational institutions and businesses contribute very significantly to the school's unique learning environment.
- Budgeting and staffing decisions are very effectively and efficiently aligned with the school's development needs.
- Professional development planning and training are very competently delivered and systematically aligned to individual learning needs and school goals.
- Monitoring and evaluation procedures are systematic and rigorous with relevant benchmarks to determine progress towards stipulated goals and timely adjustments to ensure everyone is on track.

### What the school needs to improve

- Maintain the focus on tracking the progress and achievement of boys.
- Continue to deepen teachers' understanding of data in making refinements to the curriculum and instruction.
- Further develop opportunities and facilities for parents to provide additional information to the school.

## Part 3: Main Findings

### **Progress made since the last review**

The school has made good progress in addressing the issues identified in the previous Quality Review report

### **Overall Evaluation**

**This school is outstanding.**

LaGuardia is a crucible for inspirational creativity, academic excellence and the significant personal development of its students. The school's exceedingly high expectations are built upon the fundamental premise of developing the inherent talent and ability of each student. These objectives are a reflection of the highly effective leadership of the principal. Her clarity of vision and pragmatic attention to detail have been instrumental in enhancing the deservedly high reputation, both nationally and internationally, of the school. Students strongly identify with the schools' aims and often remark what "a privilege" it is for them to attend LaGuardia. They greatly enjoy being at the school and attendance is very high. The mature rapport between staff and students is conducive to producing high quality creative responses in the arts and high standards in academic subjects. The curriculum provides a wealth of opportunities for students to be challenged and excel. The whole school environment is replete with vibrant learning opportunities and teaching is often inspirational. Staff are extremely reflective and continually look for ways to improve their practice. Students are motivated to perform at their very best. Teachers systematically track students' progress and assiduously support them if they are not reaching their potential. Parents are kept very well informed about issues directly relating to their children and are actively encouraged to be involved with activities and developments at the school. The collaborative culture of the school is reflected through the phenomenal range of partnerships it has with nationally renowned organizations and professional groups within and beyond the arts. The combination of these factors allied to the school's many outstanding strengths provides a unique, stimulating and exciting learning community where all constituents flourish. The school is always aspiring to greater things and is consistently looking at ways to improve its performance. This drive for improvement is characterized by the very effective response it has made to the last Quality Review. The achievement of boys is under constant scrutiny and is supported by specific "boy only" advisory groups. Staff have formally structured opportunities to be involved in class visits to learn and share good practice. The rigorous and focused work of the inquiry team in disseminating data and promoting change is another example of the high levels of efficacy and efficiency of this school.

## **How well the school meets New York City's evaluation criteria**

**Quality Statement 1 – Gather Data: School leaders and faculty consistently gather data and use it to understand what each student knows and is able to do and to monitor the student's progress over time.**

**This area of the school's work is outstanding.**

The school has established very effective systems for gathering meaningful data that give a clear picture of standards achieved and the progress of individual students. This commitment to data management is evident in the very rigorous process for dealing with admissions. This includes a standardized rubric to ensure objectivity, an arts placement examination, auditions and the use of prior achievement information. The process ensures that incoming students are placed in appropriate freshmen classes, including accelerated and remedial classes. In consequence, most students are making exceptional progress relative to achievement at entry. Ongoing assessments provide a wealth of valuable and highly relevant information about student achievement and progress. Students undertake research projects and complete extensive portfolios of their work. They create high quality exhibitions and give imaginative and creative studio presentations before their peers and staff. The subsequent informed critiques are part of the formative evaluation of students' work. Because this is a high performing school, with a graduation rate close to 100 percent, faculty teams are particularly vigilant in comparing student progress within grades to check if any students are struggling. There are very effective tracking procedures, which enable evidence to be compiled on attendance and progress in academic and studio classes. Staff are systematically kept informed about the progress of the relatively small number of special education students and English language learners by guidance counselors. This ensures that very well focused support is provided and challenging targets set for cohorts and individuals. The achievement of boys is a continuing focus for the whole faculty. Action research linked to student case studies is used very effectively to understand underperformance. This approach is productively used by the inquiry team who are tracking student outcomes relating to the use of technology, note taking and the impact of differentiated instruction on their learning. In order to promote this work, teachers have had very effective training to enable them to handle data and they are using it to increasing effect.

**Quality Statement 2 – Plan and Set Goals: School leaders and faculty consistently use data to understand each student's next learning steps and to set suitably high goals for accelerating each student's learning.**

**This area of the school's work is outstanding.**

The school uses data exceptionally well to devise detailed plans and to set challenging goals for student progress. These plans are the result of extensive collaborative meetings between departmental staff and guided by an associated assistant principal. Long-term goals are explicitly identified with regard to improving mastery levels, increasing the range of advanced placement courses and reducing the achievement gap between genders. The realization of these goals is clearly defined in terms of interim measurable objectives set within relative timeframes. Teachers systematically analyze a range of data after each marking period to identify common issues within the subject area or specific requirements for individual students. Staff complete informative interim progress reports to highlight students at risk and to implement preventative measures to

ensure expected rates of progress. These strategies include a guidance counselor dedicated to a group of students, reduced class sizes, an advisory group to support boys at risk and a PM school academy focusing on credit recovery. At the individual level, teachers set next-step goals so that students are always challenged in their learning. The very effective collation of formative assessment helps staff to identify students' needs, such as improving performance skills in their studio programs.

The school's specialized status pre-determines very high expectations for student performance in both studio and academic courses. These expectations are very effectively conveyed through substantial documentation, orientation sessions, grading policies and meetings with parents. The school's strong commitment to promoting high standards of achievement is reflected in its Da Vinci program of honors courses, early entry for Math A and English language arts Regents examinations and through in an extended foreign-language program for all students. Students are aware of the standards set for them through mastery rubrics established for each course. Students are expected to critically evaluate their progress towards these objectives through regular discussions with their teachers. The school has innovative systems to enable parents to give feedback through a website and e-mail facility. The school dynamically reaches out to its parents through high quality shows, gallery presentations and surveys.

**Quality Statement 3 – Align Instructional Strategy to Goals: The school aligns its academic work, strategic decisions and resources, and effectively engages students around its plans and goals for accelerating student learning.**

**This area of the school's work is outstanding.**

The diversity and richness of the curriculum is exceptional. It is a major constituent in promoting significant student achievement. The programs exceed City and State minimum standards and incorporate innovative instructional strategies, based on project learning and performance-based assessments. The school is highly successful in achieving a balance between promoting mastery in academic and artistic performance. A significant number of students graduate from the school with both a Regents-endorsed and an arts-endorsed diploma. An exhaustive range of enrichment activities includes sports, languages, debate, film and fashion. The arts pervade all aspects of school life with six distinct studio programs, each led by professionals in their field. Lesson planning reflects a strong commitment to differentiated instruction to promote a vibrant range of learning opportunities to make the most of students' interests and talents. Teaching is often exhilarating. The major emphasis in all courses is on the development of individual responsibility for learning, being evaluative of their own and other students' performance and working collaboratively. The impact of this successful approach is reflected in the many alumni who have distinguished themselves in the fields of arts, sciences, medicine, law, business, education and public service. Staff often make links between the arts and academic subjects to draw upon students' interests. The use of technology across the curriculum complements the school's drive to be at the leading edge of innovation. Significant budgetary allocations focus on formalizing inter-visitations between staff, providing additional preparation periods and employing top-flight professionals to support studio programs. Students greatly value the experience they have and want to come to school, which is why the level of absence is so low.

**Quality Statement 4 - Align Capacity Building to Goals: The development of leadership, teachers and other staff capacity is aligned to the school's collaboratively established goals for accelerating the learning of each student.**

**This area of the school's work is outstanding.**

The school very effectively builds the capacity of staff to sustain improvements in the quality of its outcomes. Many staff are acknowledged experts in their field, sometimes leading professional development in a broader context outside the school. Professional artists and performers are used imaginatively to support staff and to extend and enrich students' learning opportunities. The substantial matrix of meetings at faculty and departmental level and informally between staff provides very effective mediums for promoting professional development topics such as using technology to drive and assess instruction, portfolio development and integrating arts into academics. There is a well-structured and very effective observation program, conducted by the administration, to monitor and develop instructional practice. They give evaluative feedback professionally against specific criteria. These procedures are very productive, reflecting an increased use of technology and sharing of ideas. The school has a well-designed mentoring program to support new staff, which is enthusiastically endorsed by those for whom it is designed. Students receive exceptional guidance, both formal and informal, and greatly appreciate this help. The guidance in support of college applications or professional pathways is particularly extensive. The school is extremely well managed and disciplined despite the inherent fluidity in its organizational systems. The many links and partnerships with prestigious art organizations are unique and highly productive. These partners provide both financial and curriculum support which significantly enhance the learning opportunities students.

**Quality Statement 5 - Monitor and Revise: The school has structures for evaluating each student's progress throughout the year and for flexibly adapting plans and practices to meet its goals for accelerating learning.**

**This area of the school's work is outstanding.**

The school has a rigorous system of improvement planning which relates exceptionally well to the goals identified in its development plan. The faculty is well-informed and committed to goals that focus upon student achievement and progress, student guidance and enhanced professional development. Each goal has clearly identified interim objectives and timeframes that enable the school to evaluate whether these objectives will be achieved within specified time limits. The systematic analysis of studio performance data and classroom-based assessments is providing an effective basis for planning and identifying departmental goals to promote achievement. Professional development closely aligns with the school's goals. Teachers collaborate in a highly effective way in identifying what instruction is most beneficial. This readiness to cooperate has a powerful impact upon promoting student progress. The comprehensive collation of data for graduating students enables a focused strategy of intervention for individuals. If there are any indicators that student progress is too slow, plans and practices are rapidly and skillfully adapted to remedy this. This strategy is promoting continued improvement in graduation rates. The school is very competent in the use of periodic assessments. Analysis of student responses in the US/government course indicated the need for a more sophisticated use of primary source documentation. The foreign languages department adjusted its curriculum to address an over-reliance upon

the grammar emphasis in its courses. The extensive collaborative discussions within departments and across the faculty provide the generative basis for sustaining the mission and goals of the school. The principal's vision for LaGuardia is exceptionally well communicated to the whole school community. Despite its size and complex programs of study, the school remains flexible and adaptable to student needs. The school's quest for excellence is clearly tangible and provides a truly exceptional environment for students to "live out their dream".

## Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

<b>SCHOOL NAME: Fiorello H. LaGuardia High School of Music &amp; Art and Performing Arts</b>	Δ	▷	✓	+	◇
<b>Quality Score</b>					X

**Quality Statement 1 – Gather Data: School leaders and faculty consistently gather and generate data and use it to understand what each student knows and is able to do and to monitor the students progress over time.**

To what extent do school leaders and faculty provide . . .	Δ	▷	✓	+	◇
1.1 an objective, constantly updated understanding of the performance and progress of each student, classroom, grade level?					X
1.2 an objective, constantly updated understanding of the performance and progress of special education students?					X
1.3 an objective, constantly updated understanding of the performance and progress of English language learners?					X
1.4 an objective, constantly updated understanding of the performance and progress of ethnic groups, gender groups and all other categories of interest to the school?				X	
1.5 a measurement of performance and progress based on the school's own past performance, and among students, classrooms, grades and subject areas?					X
1.6 a measurement of performance and progress based on comparisons with similar schools?					X
1.7 training, management systems and structures that support teachers in the use of school data to inform planning and instruction and to track the progress of students?				X	
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 1</b>					X

**Quality Statement 2 – Plan and Set Goals: School leaders and faculty consistently use data to understand each student's next learning steps and to set suitably high goals for accelerating each students learning.**

To what extent do school leaders and faculty . . .	Δ	▷	✓	+	◇
2.1 engage in collaborative processes to set rigorous, objectively measurable goals for improvement, and to develop plans and timeframes for reaching those goals?					X
2.2 focus on each student, classroom, grade level, academic subject and group of students whose performance or progress has been identified by the school as a particular focus area?					X
2.3 identify and improve the performance and progress of those students in greatest need of improvement?					X
2.4 share whole school goals with all members of the school community to rigorously improve the performance and progress of students?					X
2.5 convey consistently high expectations to students and their parents/caregivers?					X
2.6 regularly provide students and their parents/caregivers with information about the goals set for each student, and about each student's progress and performance, and how they can improve?					X
2.7 invite and enable parents/caregivers to provide useful information to teachers and the school about the learning needs and capacities of their children?				X	
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 2</b>					X

**Quality Statement 3 – Align Instructional Strategy to Goals: The school aligns its academic work, strategic decisions and resources, and effectively engages students around its plans and goals for accelerating student learning.**

To what extent does the school . . .	Δ	▷	✓	+	◇
3.1 select core curricular approaches that facilitate and provide meaningful interim data about progress towards goals and focus on raising the achievement of students?					X
3.2 provide a broad and engaging curriculum, including the arts, to enhance learning both within and outside the school day?					X
3.3 hold teachers accountable for the progress and learning of the students in their charge, for making instruction interesting and compelling, and for creating a positive safe and inclusive learning environment?					X
3.4 ensure that teachers use school, class and student data to plan for and provide differentiated instruction that meets the specific needs of all the students in their charge?					X
3.5 make budgeting, staffing and scheduling decisions strategically, based on data, to meet the school's academic goals for all students?					X
3.6 ensure that there is an environment of mutual trust and respect between all staff and students to support personal and academic development?					X
3.7 ensure that there are effective and consistently applied procedures to encourage and monitor student attendance and tardiness?					X
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 3</b>					X

<b>Quality Statement 4 – Align Capacity Building to Goals: The development of leadership, teachers and other staff capacity is aligned to the school’s collaboratively established goals for accelerating the learning of each student.</b>					
<b>To what extent does the school . . .</b>	<b>Δ</b>	<b>➤</b>	<b>✓</b>	<b>+</b>	<b>◇</b>
4.1 use frequent observations of classroom teaching by the principal and other available information to develop a differentiated strategy for improving the quality of each teacher’s instruction?					<b>X</b>
4.2 make professional development decisions strategically, based on data, to help meet the improvement goals of students and teachers?					<b>X</b>
4.3 provide frequent opportunities for teachers to observe each other’s classroom instruction and to meet together in teams to plan, share effective practices, and evaluate one another’s instruction in an open and reflective professional environment?					<b>X</b>
4.4 develop effective procedures for the induction and support of teachers who are new to the profession or the school?					<b>X</b>
4.5 align youth development, guidance/advising and other student support services around stated academic and personal development goals?					<b>X</b>
4.6 consistently implement clear procedures that enable the school to run smoothly and encourage effective student learning, and effectively address discipline related incidents?					<b>X</b>
4.7 create effective partnerships with outside entities that support the academic and personal growth of the students?					<b>X</b>
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 4</b>					<b>X</b>

<b>Quality Statement 5 – Monitor and Revise: The school has structures for evaluating each student’s progress throughout the year and for flexibly adapting plans and practices to meet its goals for accelerating learning.</b>					
<b>To what extent do . . .</b>	<b>Δ</b>	<b>➤</b>	<b>✓</b>	<b>+</b>	<b>◇</b>
5.1 the school’s plans for improving student outcomes include interim goals that are objectively measurable and have suitable time frames for measuring success and making adjustments?					<b>X</b>
5.2 the school’s plans for improving teacher outcomes include interim goals that are objectively measurable and have suitable time frames for measuring success and making adjustments?					<b>X</b>
5.3 teachers and faculty use periodic assessments and other diagnostic tools to measure the effectiveness of plans and interventions for individual and groups of students in key areas?					<b>X</b>
5.4 teachers and faculty use the information generated by periodic assessments and other progress measures and comparisons to revise plans immediately in order to reach stated goals?					<b>X</b>
5.5 school leaders track the outcomes of periodic assessments and other diagnostic measures and use the results to makes strategic decisions to modify practices to improve student outcomes?					<b>X</b>
5.6 school leaders and staff use each plan’s interim and final outcomes to drive the next stage of goal setting and improvement planning?					<b>X</b>
5.7 the principal and school community have a clear vision for the future development of the school and implement procedures and systems to effect change?					<b>X</b>
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 5</b>					<b>X</b>

◇	<b>Outstanding</b>
+	<b>Well Developed</b>
✓	<b>Proficient</b>
➤	<b>Underdeveloped with Proficient Features</b>
Δ	<b>Underdeveloped</b>